

**NEW JERSEY  
BEST PRACTICES  
2002-2003 APPLICATION**

*Cherry Hill HS*

**Failure to comply with the procedures for submission of the application will result in the elimination of the application.**

**Application Requirements:**

- RESPONSES to the information and the statements below must be ANONYMOUS and ACCURATE.**  
No reference should be made to the names of the district, the school(s) or community. Use the words "the school" or "the schools" in responding to the statements
- USE ONLY THE SPACE PROVIDED ON THE APPLICATION FORM on pages 1, 2 (if applicable), and 4.** Do not include any additional materials, as they will not be reviewed in the selection process.
- Applications must be typed on 8 1/2" x 11" white paper, portrait format. Twelve-point or larger computer font or fourteen-pitch or larger typewritten font must be used. This sentence is in twelve-point Times New Roman.
- Keybarded responses to all the statements below must be no more than a total of four pages. Keyboard and number the statement followed by the response. Format your response for clarity.
- The information on page 4 and the responses to statements must be copied on one side of the page.** The information on pages 1 and 2 (if applicable) must be copied on one side of the page. Staple pages 1, 2 (if applicable), 4, and the keybarded responses together, in that same order.
- The original application must be signed by the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person, indicating his/her approval.
- The original and seven copies of the application must be submitted to the county superintendent of schools by December 15, 2002, with the Itemized List of District Applications form.** Keep the seven copies of each application together with the original containing the signature of the district chief school administrator or charter school lead person on the top of each set.

The following data is required to assist the panelists in the evaluation of the application:			
Type of School	Grade Levels	Practice Name	Racism: The Politics of Hatred
Elementary School		Number of Schools with Practice	1
Middle School		Number of Districts with Practice	1
Junior High School		Location	Urban/City Suburban With Urban Characteristics
X High School	10-12	X Suburban	Small City/Town Rural
Other:			

Check the ONE CATEGORY into which the practice best fits.		
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts (Visual and Performing Arts)	<input type="checkbox"/> Gifted and Talented Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Safe Learning Environment
<input type="checkbox"/> Assessment/Evaluation	<input type="checkbox"/> Guidance and Counseling Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> School-to-Careers/Workplace Readiness
<input type="checkbox"/> Citizenship/Character Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Health and Physical Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Science
X <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Diversity and Equity Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Language Arts Literacy	<input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies
<input type="checkbox"/> Early Childhood Education Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Mathematics	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Support Programs	<input type="checkbox"/> Professional Development	<input type="checkbox"/> World Languages/Bilingual Education
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational Technology	<input type="checkbox"/> Public Engagement	
	(family involvement and partnerships with business, community, school districts, and/or higher education)	

- Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.
- List the specific *Core Curriculum Content Standards*, including the *Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards*,\* addressed by the practice and describe how the practice addresses those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.
- Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.
- Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.

\*The 2002 edition of the *Core Curriculum Content Standards* published by the New Jersey State Department of Education was disseminated to all districts and charter schools and is available on line through the department's web site at <http://www.state.nj.us/education>.

*1. Describe the practice proposed for recognition, and list its objectives. Detail how the practice is innovative and how it promotes high student achievement.*

**“Racism is a learned affliction and anything  
that is learned can be unlearned.”**

**- Jane Elliot**

Imagine a world free of stereotypes, free of discrimination, free of scapegoating, free of prejudice, and free of racism. These concepts are the backbone of Racism: The Politics of Hatred.

The setting: a suburban high school, with a diverse population of 1,700 students, demanding help in developing an understanding of human nature, and answering the questions: what are the roots of racism, and what happens when people hate so much that they act on that hatred? **The best practice proposed for recognition is the student centered instructional pedagogy utilized consistently in this unique student sensitive course, Racism: The Politics of Hatred. Participants forge their way through a student driven curriculum that focuses upon a multitude of current events topics related to the volatile theme Racism: The Politics of Hatred, inevitably leading students through a journey of self-reflection, growing awareness, and understanding of the similarities of the human condition through several authentic assessments.** An elective course, with only life experiences and exposure as a textbook, the program is offered to any student in grades 10-12. It is one of the few electives offered that does not carry a level of tracking. Not eliminating any level of student, Racism: The Politics of Hatred is a window of opportunity to open the mind and experience a non-traditional course, full of values and life lessons. A plan that is diverse in curriculum, as well as approach and enrollment, this is more of a process of exploration, both of self and culture.

In an unsettling world of conflict and turmoil students basically wrote this program when they demonstrated the undeniable need for an outlet in which they could learn about those around them. Unlike a traditional instructional approach, this practice incorporates project-based learning and student directed growth through a series of objectives:

- A. To develop an understanding that not all people are created equally
- B. To analyze society and the motivation behind why people act the way that they do
- C. To answer questions pertinent to self-examination, and to understand diversity and equity through the analysis of the roots of racism and hatred to the extreme

The innovative component of this program is that it is driven by the human condition and the students' place in the world around them. In a time when students are on the cusp of adulthood, but linger in their youth, life lessons sometimes become the most valuable in any academic career. The Racism program is one of just that, understanding the human character, as well as identifying and evaluating the driving force behind humanity. No matter what, people are people, and acceptance is integral in establishing a world absent of the abuses we inflict on one another. From the beginning of this journey through the human psyche students are exposed to a plethora of stimuli to analyze and evaluate in order to begin the lifelong tasks of understanding who they really are and the world around them.

This program is defined by the student population, and is intended to help diffuse ongoing tensions among groups at the secondary school level. It is motivated by the everyday occurrences within the school, as well as the outside world. Within the context of this program students evaluate a multitude of oral, written, and visual materials. As part of their evaluation they are addressing current issues and trends in society in order to identify the barriers that society creates, as well as

determine levels of understanding and acceptance. Ultimately, Rodney King said it best when he stated loudly and clearly for the world to hear, "Can't we all just get along?" Throughout the study of *The Politics of Hatred* students work to retrain their insights and ideas, as well as their opinions, to produce a more open minded approach, and hopefully "get along."

The infusion of a semester long awareness project helps with this process. As the entire curriculum is based on student identified needs, as well as an authentic assessment approach, students truly define the program. As the teacher I serve more as a facilitator and mediator for specific topics, however, the students get out of the course what they put into the course. The awareness project was a brainstorm of the students as they came in one day and declared the feeling that we were accomplishing so much within the small setting, but so many of their peers were losing out. With this new agenda the awareness project was developed with the intention to bring their enthusiasm and conviction to a larger audience. With the philosophy that "the sky's the limit" the students create what they assess to be the most worthwhile approach to spread their message of tolerance and acceptance. As their process begins they determine the project for the semester with only two requirements. First, the essential questions must be addressed, "what are the roots of racism and what happens when people act on their hatred?" Second, the students must deliver a product that can be used with the entire student body, or within the community. Past projects have included public service announcements aired on our local cable television station, the creation of a unity quilt displayed in the school, and the writing of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade children's stories that were shared with the local elementary schools. During the presentation of these stories the students were interviewed and spotlighted in the local area newspaper as being innovative leaders, as well as role models for spreading their powerful message throughout the community.

Throughout the program students participate in many activities and authentic assessments that center around both pertinent current topics, as well as preparation for the completion of their awareness project. No two sections are identical in requirements as no two groups of students are identical. This fits directly into the philosophical approach to this curriculum, as it is critical to identify that no two people are alike.

Several culminating activities fortify the achievement of the students as they write descriptions of wall plaques that they create as a remembrance to victims of violent and hate crimes. As one student writes, "Love Covers All. No matter whether you are black, white, Spanish, man, or child, we should love regardless of what we see, because love covers all!" Another student responds to Jane Elliot by stating, "...Do people get to pick their religion when they are born? No. You go by the way that you are brought up, and what you are told in most cases. If you are constantly told the same thing you believe that it is true. People that grow up in such environments need to unlearn what they were taught and see for themselves that a certain group of people is not one person. We are all individuals. Although it would take time the belief that one is superior can be unlearned." This practice successfully attempts the "unlearning" process.

***2. List the specific Core Curriculum Content Standards, and the Cross-Content Workplace Readiness Standards addressed by the practice and describe how the practice address those standard(s). Provide an example to substantiate your response.***

The ongoing themes of this program include the roots of racism and the effects of what happens when people hate so much that they feel the need to act on that hatred. In focusing on these themes, the students investigate the historical background of the development of the United States and the world, as well as the groups that perpetuate hatred throughout society.

As we delve further into the process of understanding and developing acceptance and tolerance for the world around us students are focusing on a current events based curriculum. It is difficult to test students in the traditional way on beliefs and feelings on specific topics; therefore, each assessment must be designed in a way to maintain the NJ standards, and the Cross Content Workplace Readiness Standards, but not compromise the legitimacy of the program. In doing this the students address several standards in a multitude of ways.

The entire curriculum fits into NJ standard 6.5 as all students use historical background for these cutting-edge topics, and need to pull on their background knowledge of NJ, the US, and the world. As each student progresses through each topic they are assessed in a variety of ways. As part of their public awareness project they may choose to write a play analyzing the daily life of a high school student and the effects of stereotyping, or produce a public service announcement. They have even produced school wide assemblies, as well as children's books, and a unity quilt. (1.2.4) (2.2.10) (5.2.3)(1.3.1)(4.1.13) (5.4.9) (4.2.10)

They are also required to reflect upon ways that tolerance and acceptance can be reached in society through journal entries and discussion. Within this journal they address specific topics, as well as analyze multiple media sources and the impact that they have on societal thoughts and actions. In discussion they analyze current television shows, as well as recent articles and trends.(2.2.10) (3.3.15) (3.5.10) (5.4.9) (3.1.2) (4.2.10) (5.2.4)

To achieve a better understanding of the complications caused by racism, as well as the multiple groups that surround them students are required to do several research assignments based on current events. They trace hate groups in society, as well as identify the various ethnicities that surround them through research.(3.5.10) (5.2.3) (5.4.9) (3.1.2) (4.2.10) (5.2.4)

***3. Describe the educational needs of students that the practice addresses. Document the assessment measures used to determine the extent to which the objectives of the practice have been met. Provide assessments and data to show how the practice met these needs.***

Within Racism: The Politics of Hatred, the student is exposed to several assignments that measure the objectives that are designed to identify and understand the roots of racism, and to examine what happens when hatred is taken to the extreme. The journey that this program takes the student through exposes every individual to cutting edge current events topics, which require an element of self-reflection and open mindedness. Academically, Racism: The Politics of Hatred fulfills both cognitive and affective educational practices.

Cognitively the curriculum addresses reading and interpreting information about various current event topics, viewing current television shows and movies, written analysis of the images and impressions that a media oriented society provides the audience, as well as discussion about the impact of each stimuli. Affectively these assessments tap into the students' individual psyches, as well as their belief systems. Continually the students are bombarded with information, analyzing it in order to fully understand who they are and why they act and believe as they do. In going through this process the students are able to demonstrate continual self-reflection, both internally and externally, as they share these reflections in discussion and journal entries.

As a first journal entry students are asked to write a list of what bugs them. There are no boundaries, just no names, and no limits on length. By the end of this 16-week semester the students are again asked to create a bug list. **Statistically the second list is much shorter as 80% of the students have developed a firmer sense of those around them, and have a better understanding of tolerance and acceptance.** People can't help who they are, they can only aspire to be the best that they can be.

Additionally, as this program is not ranked in GPA, or tracked for difficulty, it draws a much more diverse group of young adults. Traditionally these students have very limited opportunities for electives throughout their schooling and often choose Racism because it is open to all. As a result, there tends to be the enrollment of students with a history of discipline problems ranging from insubordination to class cutting. **For the 270 students that I have taught throughout the run of this program less than 2% have received disciplinary referrals from me, as they have truly found a place where it is acceptable to be who they are.**

With the inception of the awareness program almost **85% of the students receive an A or B as a final average, as well as approximately 80% of them receiving an A, B, or C for class participation.** Participation is encouraged through multiple assessments, from active participation, listening, writing, watching, and discussing any of the topics presented. The use of student and teacher rubrics is an essential, on-going assessment component. From the quietest of students to the most vocal, each has the same opportunity to achieve high participation grades. Additionally, the students create their own ground rules of what is acceptable behavior in the classroom in order to promote good character and a level of comfort within the room.

***4. Describe how you would replicate the practice in another school and/or district.***

This program can readily be duplicated for any school district. The NJCCC standards drive the curriculum and the activities utilize current events and societal issues as the resources. This curriculum has no textbooks because it is based on life lessons. Television, media and the student population are the driving force of the activities. There are no formal tests as all assessment is performance based. The critical component in the replication of this program is finding a teacher that is willing to abandon the traditional classroom approach and view himself as a mentor/facilitator. This program demands that a dedicated teacher, who is willing to let the students "take the ball and run with it", serve as a "coach" to the students through this process. As long as there is an understanding that students need an outlet and there is an open mind to provide this, this program will benefit any school and/or district.

**In retrospect,** as Bill Clinton brought America into the 21<sup>st</sup> century he committed, for all to hear, his initiative on race. This initiative was a critical element for our country to head into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. He envisioned an America based on opportunity for all, responsibility from all, and one community of all Americans. The President recognized that even as America rapidly becomes the world's first truly multi-racial democracy, race relations remain an issue that too often divides our nation and keeps the American dream from being real for everyone who works for it. **The implementation of Racism: The Politics of Hatred brings us one step closer to realizing Clinton's dream of moving through this millennium "together as one." We must all remember that every little bit counts and that we all have something valuable to offer in this endeavor.**